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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 002600

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [YM](#) [GTIP](#) [HUMAN](#) [RIGHTS](#)

SUBJECT: ROYG REFUGEE CRACKDOWN: A SHIFT IN POLICY?

REF: A. SANAA 00611

[B](#). SANAA 02421

[C](#). SANAA 02006

Classified By: DCM Nabeel Khoury for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Reports of a ROYG crackdown on undocumented refugees are circulating amidst rumors the Ministry of Interior (MOI) released an internal report calling for more stringency in dealing with undocumented refugees in Yemen, particularly from the Horn of Africa (HOA). It is yet unclear whether this current sweep resembles past actions, which resulted in few if any refugee deportations, or whether it represent a shift in ROYG policy towards refugees and illegal aliens. End Summary.

Reports difficult to confirm

[1](#)2. (C) There are reports that ROYG has cast a wide net across the country to round up and deport undocumented aliens and refugees, particularly from Ethiopia and Eritrea. Although the scope of the crackdown is difficult to gage, anecdotal evidence and press reports suggest increased activities of the security forces against aliens.

[1](#)3. (C) An official at the Ministry of Human Rights (MHR) confirmed an ongoing sweep of refugees in Aden and Sanaa. He added that in addition to undocumented HOA refugees, the sweep also targets Sudanese nationals, and undocumented Iraqi women, many of whom are purportedly trafficked to Yemen for prostitution, ref A. According to the official, the MHR does not know how widespread the round up is because undocumented refugees are afraid to come to the government for help.

[1](#)4. (U) Non-governmental sources close to the refugee problem in Yemen could not confirm a major change in direction in how the ROYG handles refugees. An official at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) noted that the ROYG tends to conduct annual sweeps of undocumented aliens, but usually just registers and releases them. Refugees from Ethiopia and Eritrea are particularly vulnerable as they are not granted prima-facie refugee status. This contrasts sharply with Somali refugees who are more granted prima-facie protection. (Note: According to UNHCR, there are only approximately 2,000 registered Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees, far below the actual number which is unknown. End Note).

Is the ROYG ready to change its tone on refugees?

[1](#)5. (C) The current sweep follows unconfirmed reports of a August 3 MOI internal report on refugees rumored to state that there are terrorists and HIV positive individuals among the refugee population and recommending measures to address the situation. According to a UNHCR official familiar with the report, these measure include eliminating the differentiation between Somali and other refugees, excluding refugees from employment and citizenship no matter the legitimacy of their claim, activating security, committees nationwide to deal exclusively with refugee matters, creating a detention center to help facilitate more immediate deportation of refugees, and increasing the restriction of movement of refugees.

[1](#)6. (C) The internal MOI report sparked debate between MOI and other Ministries, namely MFA and MHR. According to officials, MOI had become increasingly hard-line on refugee issues following the Sa'da insurgency in the North, refs B and C. Most recently, the MOI blocked the creation of six Permanent Refugee centers throughout Yemen to help house and facilitate Horn of Africa refugees.

Comment

[1](#)7. (C) It is premature to judge whether or not this current sweep represents a new, stiffer ROYG refugee policy. Human Rights Minister Amat Aleem as-Soswa has noted several times privately and publicly that international aid must increase if Yemen is to continue to take refugees. What is clear is that the ROYG is serious about controlling and preventing

further Iraqi women, probably trafficked, from taking up
illegal residence here as prostitutes. Post will continue to
follow this issue as it relates to the status of refugees and
TIP in Yemen. End Comment.
KRAJESKI